



NEWS

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Agencies Publish Rules on Northwestern Hawaiian Island Monument

WASHINGTON, DC – Following President Bush's designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as a national monument on June 15, the two federal agencies charged with managing the monument today published regulations in the Federal Register codifying the management measures and prohibitions outlined in the President's proclamation.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument encompasses nearly 140,000 square miles of U.S. waters, including 4,500 square miles of relatively undisturbed coral reef habitat that is home to more than 7,000 species. The national monument also encompasses the lands and waters of the Hawaiian Island Reservation established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, site of the key World War II sea battle and the Battle of Midway National Memorial. The new monument is cooperatively managed by three co-trustees: the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State of Hawaii.

The Proclamation had the full force and effect of law, and the management measures and prohibitions described within it became effective upon issuance. The rule codifies the Proclamation's important protections: the phase out of commercial fishing, the strict regulation of access to and activities within the monument area, the preservation of Native Hawaiian cultural activities, the careful regulation of educational and scientific activities, and the prohibition on oil, gas and mineral exploration and extraction.

The provisions of the final rule were effective upon filing with the Federal Register. Because the rule restates the provisions of the Proclamation, which became effective upon issuance by the President, the notice and comment period and 30-day delay in effective date are unnecessary.

The President issued his Proclamation following extensive public comment calling for protection. This region had been part of a five-year study under a National Marine Sanctuary designation process, during which federal and state entities, native Hawaiian leaders, and the public have participated in strong collaboration with significant amounts of testimony and input to develop a plan with broad-based consensus. Since 2000, more than 52,000 public

comments were received, most supporting strong protection. Furthermore, the Co-Trustees will be involving the public in a number of activities related to the Monument, including holding a series of public meetings in Hawaii this fall on the Monument, the development of a draft management plan and a draft visitor's plan. Any further needed regulations resulting from this process will feature public comment.

The co-trustees predict the monument will be a model for cooperative conservation to provide effective management and protection for these remote, ecologically and culturally significant islands and atolls.

More information, including the newly published regulation, can be found at:

<http://hawaiireef.noaa.gov/>.

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